

INTERVIEW WITH SID MORGAN  
BY ED GROSSMAN AUGUST 27, 2002  
Also present: Jack Hodges, Jake Jacobson, Joe McClung

*Note from transcriptionist: I have identified the speaker whenever possible. During the course of conversation they do not identify themselves each time they speak to one another. When one addresses another by name, his answer is identified with his name.*

MR. GROSSMAN: This is August 27, 2003. This is Ed Grossman, and also present are Jack Hodges, Jake Jacobson and Joe McClung. We are interviewing Sid Morgan for his perspective on the history of the T boats, particularly the Surfbird and the Curlew. Sid I'd like to start off by asking you a few background questions. Could you tell us where you were born and when?

MR. MORGAN: I was born in Glendive, Montana in 1920.

MR. GROSSMAN: Where your parents from that area?

MR. MORGAN: My parents were from North Dakota.

MR. GROSSMAN: Did you live on a farm or a ranch?

MR. MORGAN: I lived on a ranch when I was real young. Then my father migrated down to Florida. He worked for the Seaboard Airline Company building that Seaboard Airline railroad into Florida, through the swamp county. I started school in Florida. I was there for about five years. Then my father moved back to North Dakota working for the Great Northern Railroad. Then we moved from there and went out to California. We were in southern California, Los Angeles. The Depression hit and everybody was in pretty sorry state of affairs and we moved out to the Hemet Valley. That's on your way to Idyllwild, which is a mountain resort. We lived out there until I was about eleven or twelve. Then we migrated to the State of Washington. I finished high school in Castle Rock, Washington. That's where I first met Fred Robards.

MR. GROSSMAN: Fred was with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

MR. MORGAN: No, we were kids! [Laughing]

MR. GROSSMAN: So you met him in school, in Washington State?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MR. GROSSMAN: Were both of you studying something related to fish and wildlife management?

MR. MORGAN: No. Neither one of us went to college. But we were interested in wildlife and fisheries. The two of us always talked about going to Alaska. That's when we were in high school.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was your interest because of hunting or fishing?

MR. MORGAN: Well, we were interested in hunting and fishing of course, as young people. We were interested in conservation. We were interested in waterfowl. But in those days it was kind of tough going to college. I went to the University of Washington and checked it out after I got back from the Service [military]. I was married and had two children at that time and I figured I couldn't make it. I never gave up my interest of going to Alaska. So finally Fred found his way up here through his brother. And he went to work for the NC Company as a mechanic.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was that NC Machinery?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah. That's right here in Juneau. That's how he got his foot in the door. Then he met Clay Scutter who was a Supervisor of Fisheries at that time. He got on running one of the boats. I am not sure which boat it was. It may have been the Skipjack, but I'm not absolutely sure on that. That was a forty-two foot boat.

MR. GROSSMAN: So your exposure to boats in general, was that through Fred?

MR. MORGAN: No that was just a little bit of history about Fred. He was there for about a year, and then he was transferred during the summer to Bristol Bay. He was under the supervision of the biologist Burtell Johnson. They were getting ready to start the Weir Program. This was 1949. The winter of 1948, Fred came back down to Seattle. That's where I was working. I was working in construction. No, I was working for the ice company I believe, driving a truck. We talked all night about Alaska. He said that there might be an opening in Bristol Bay for me to come up and work there for the summer. I asked him what the job would be, and he told that it was as a pile driver operator. I told him that I had never operated a pile driver. But I told him that I didn't think it was that complicated. I said, "I've operated donkeys in the woods", you know, two drum donkeys. So I told his boss, when I was interviewed by Burtell Johnson the straight facts that I hadn't run a pile driver. He said, "I think you can work out alright". So that's how I got started in the Fish and Wildlife Service. Clarence Rhode, at that time was the Regional Director for Alaska. He was over Fisheries and Wildlife. At that time they paid overtime as well as furnishing room and board, etc. I remember the season was over; I had earned more money that summer than he had! We put in a lot of long hours.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Your family stayed in Seattle?

MR. MORGAN: My family stayed in Seattle, and I was up there for six months. They didn't do like they do now. They send them back every month or so. So it was a lot of sacrifice as far as your family was concerned.

MR. GROSSMAN: The Regional Office at that time was in...

MR. MORGAN: Right here in Juneau.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It wasn't called a "Regional Office" either was it? Wasn't it like an "Area Office"?

MR. MORGAN: You know, I can't remember when that change came about.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It was still an Area Office when I came up.

MR. GROSSMAN: So they administered the services of the Alaska for the Fish and Wildlife Service out of Juneau, but you were hired on for six months and you returned to Seattle?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. Then I was back to driving the truck again. I had a pretty good deal. I went from the ice company to an oil company through my connection with the ice company. That worked out real well because I could work up here in the summer and they needed extra help down there in the winter. I used to haul oil clear up to Snoqualmie, up at the ski resort.

MR. GROSSMAN: You mentioned that you were in the Armed Services. What branch of the Service were you in?

MR. MORGAN: I was in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. I went over to Europe as a replacement. I didn't get there until after Bastogne, with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. I was in combat in Alsace-Lorraine, a little place between France and Germany.

MR. GROSSMAN: What year was that Sid?

MR. MORGAN: That was in 1945. It was at the end of the war. I had about six months of service in Europe. I got shot at the end of the war, by one of our guys. They call it...

MR. GROSSMAN: ...Friendly fire.

MR. MORGAN: "Friendly fire", right.

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM ALL PRESENT: That didn't seem so friendly!

MR. GROSSMAN: So were you shot down?

MR. MORGAN: No, I just got hit in the arm.

MR. GROSSMAN: I see, so you were on the ground? You weren't in an airplane?

MR. MORGAN: I guess I'd better get back to the story about Alaska.

MR. GROSSMAN: Your spouse and kids, what did they think of your tales of your first stint in Alaska? Did that spur and interest?

MR. MORGAN: Oh yes. My wife was always supportive of what I wanted to do. She was pretty efficient in running the family. She liked Seattle and in those days she used to do a lot of driving. She didn't have any problems with transportation when I was gone.

MR. GROSSMAN: Did you meet your wife in Washington state then?

MR. MORGAN: I met her in school in Castle Rock, Washington.

MR. GROSSMAN: What is her name?

MR. MORGAN: Her name is Erna. Her maiden name was Kluth.

MR. GROSSMAN: And your kids?

MR. MORGAN: My daughter is the oldest. Her name is Sharon. Rose is her middle name. My oldest boy is Sid, Jr. He is about the fifth in the family. [Fifth person with the name Sid] My middle son is Roderick L., and my youngest son is Jeffery Dean.

MR. GROSSMAN: Are some or all of your kids still in Alaska?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, all of them are in Alaska. In fact, I have twelve grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

MR. GROSSMAN: Wow! How did your six-month stint turn into your career?

MR. MORGAN: The next summer...well, I left out something about the first weir that we worked on. It's kind of interesting. We had a lot of difficulty clear up to the Weir sight, which is just below the rapids of the lower Ugashik Lake. There is a big lagoon in between where the weir was built, between the rapids and the big lagoon. We finally got

all of the equipment. We had two forty-foot boats; the King and the Sockeye. We had a sixty-foot, old heavy wood scowl. It was loaded with lumber and fuel. There was enough materiel to build an addition on to the weir cabin, which was in pretty bad repair. We had a forty-foot pile driver with the gins down. We had a twenty-four foot pot scowl, which was the work scowl for working during the construction of the weir. We got to the end of the river where the lagoon emptied into the Ugashik River. That was as far as we could go with the big boats. It was getting pretty shallow. So we went out with our little weir skiff. We had a little inboard weir skiff, with a Porsche or Jeep engine in it. We ran out in the lagoon in that. And we ran aground with it. We knew we were in trouble. Then we got out and waded all around this daggoned lagoon to find the deepest channel going over to the weir site. We took these weir pickets; they are bull nosed, two inch.... You all know what weir pickets are don't you?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Don't know?

MR. GROSSMAN: Where they wood?

MR. MORGAN: They were two-inch stuff that was bull nosed in the front. They were flat on the back. We drove these in where the deepest water was so we could follow them. The lagoon is a pretty large lagoon and there were no reference points there. We finally towed the scowl in that deepest water, and got it up there because we had to get it up there. Then we towed the pile driver. No, I take that back. We didn't take the big scowl up. We took the pile driver scowl up. Then we had to shuttle all of this material off of the big scowl. That included our fuel, which was all in big barrels. There was stove oil and gasoline. Of course, we had kegs of nails and spikes and bolts to put the weir together. The legs on the weir were four by sixes. We finally got all of the stuff up there and we started driving the weir. We got to the ninth piling. I was doing great on driving these daggoned piling and I was getting pretty 'catty' with that wench. I caught the hammer short of the top of the piling. That pulled the head block down. It was a big head block, all reinforced with galvanized metal. There was about this much where it could break; where it was sitting on the gins. Boy that created a little excitement on the pile driver. Nobody got hurt, luckily. Then we had the process of building this beam up there. And it was rather intricate because we had to get all of this faring through the block. Fred and I put that thing together in about three days. It held us up that much. The weir was twelve hundred feet; part of it was wire fencing in the shallow water. We built it in ten days. That was not too bad of an actual time, ten days. It was fish-tight. We had two carpenters with us. They were working on the weir shack. I haven't thought about this is along time; about how many men we had. I suppose that I am going into too much detail on this?

MR. GROSSMAN: Well, I was just curious; did they hire you guys then to work the weir? Or, did they hire another crew to move and count the fish?

MR. MORGAN: No, we counted the fish.

MR. GROSSMAN: So, you counted the fish and the whole works?

MR. MORGAN: We did the whole thing.

MR. GROSSMAN: From picking the spot and setting it up?

MR. MORGAN: Well it was an old site. Before they used to have an old horse weir there in the late 1920s. There hadn't been one put in since I think, 1927. This was 1949 when we put in this piling weir.

MR. GROSSMAN: So you worked it through that season with the fish moving through and did you dismantle it then?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, we had to take everything down except the piling.

MR. GROSSMAN: You could reuse the piling?

MR. MORGAN: You bet.

MR. GROSSMAN: The subsequent seasons then, didn't you continue to work that sort of job; pile driving and setting up weirs?

MR. MORGAN: No. The next year I was Weir Foreman on the Ugashik weir. I got promoted fast, I guess!

MR. GROSSMAN: And the Weir Foreman would just oversee the whole project?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, I had the responsibility that year of putting it in.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You were still pile driving?

MR. MORGAN: No, no! We left the piling in. The only thing was that the ice pulled one piling on us. Then there was an old weir horse. You know, those big horses that they had. There were two legs in the back and one in front. We got this thing and kind of resurrected in and stuck it out there in the spot where the ice had pulled this one piling.

MR. GROSSMAN: So you went from pile driving to Foreman of the weir. Then where did you go?

MR. MORGAN: That was in 1950. In 1951 I went back and we put in the weir again. 1951 was a kind of a rough year. I was down at the Red Salmon Cannery, tied up at the

dock waiting for the weather. The barometer really dropped. I had the two forty-foot boats and the inboard skiff that we used as a weir skiff. We had fuel aboard both of the forty-foot boats. And we were heading out to go down to Ugashik. I called the boss that I had at that time; it wasn't Burt, he was laid up that summer. It was a guy by the name of Bob Holcombe. I told him that the barometer was really falling and I really didn't want to go out because it could really get nasty out there on open water on Bristol Bay. It's fairly shallow and it piles up in there. He ordered me out with the boats. I told him it was against my better judgment.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: But he told you to go anyway?

MR. MORGAN: He told me to go. He was the boss. So we went. We got off to about the mouth of Egegik and this storm hit, and I mean man was it rough! It was blowing about eighty. We were taking green water over the top. The engine boards were all awash with salt water. We only had one of these kinds of bilge pumps on deck. [Demonstrating hand pumping action] All of my crew was sick. What a terrible ride that was!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Terrible! [Agreeing—may have been a crewmember]

MR. MORGAN: The weir skiff swamped, naturally, with green water going over the top of the boat. We had it in tow. It blew my antennae right off of the boat. That gives you some idea of how rough it was. I was so scared I wasn't sick!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It was terrible!

MR. MORGAN: I had all of these guys with me; two boats! So anyway, we got up to the Ugashik buoy, where you turn in to Smoky Point and as soon as we made that turn; instead of having our nose into it, it was coming over our quarter stern. Then it gave us this. [Demonstrating a movement of the boat] The first one of those pulled the eyebolt right out of the weir skiff. I had double lines on it.

MR. GROSSMAN: It was herking and jerking and pulled it right out?

MR. MORGAN: And the last I saw of it was the bow, going down. So we finally go into Smoky Point, that's going in to Ugashik Bay, and as soon as we got inside there, we were in the clear. The office was King Salmon. In those days it was Naknak. Naknak Air Force Base. The next day they sent out the Goose looking for us because we hadn't communicated with them, we couldn't! So I held the mike out of the window of the King and wagged it to show them that we had no communications. Of course the Goose wagged his wings, at least he knew we were still alive. We went on up the river. It was a real handicap, not having the little inboard workboat. We got up to the weir we had to jury rig a transom on the back of the work scowl and we hung some outboards on it, two outboards so we could maneuver it around.

MR. GROSSMAN: You made do with what you had then.

MR. MORGAN: Sure! It made it really difficult but we got the weir in on time.

MR. GROSSMAN: How many years did you work out west Sid, doing the weirs and things like that?

MR. MORGAN: I worked three year straight at that time; 1949, 1950, and 1951. I was so disgusted with this guy that ordered me out because he blamed me for loosing the weir skiff. It just burned me up, you know! He didn't want to take any responsibility. So in 1952 I didn't go up. I figured to hell with that! I had had enough! But I had made some contacts with Law Enforcement because I was doing Law Enforcement after the weir program was in. I went out with the boat and did patrol work with it. I did that in 1949 too.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was that a Fish and Wildlife Service boat?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, it was the Fish and Wildlife vessel "King". Bob Mahafy was the Agent in Dillingham at that time. In the fall of 1952 he wrote me a letter and asked if I would come up and be is Assistant on a trainee program. I could get in that way. So I talked that over with my wife and asked her what she thought about moving into a small village. She thought that would be all right. I went up early. I went up in January of 1953. My wife came up in June of 1953.

MR. GROSSMAN: And this is to Dillingham?

MR. MORGAN: Yes, to Dillingham. So I worked there as Bob Mahafy's Assistant. Of course we had a little Pacer. We could use wheels, skis and floats on it. So that's where I started to get a little interested in flying. I did a little flying. I finally got my student permit.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I didn't know that!

MR. MORGAN: Oh, I've probably got three hundred hours!

MR. GROSSMAN: What sorts of Law Enforcement activities were you doing?

MR. MORGAN: It was Wildlife and Fisheries.

MR. GROSSMAN: And how many years did you do that?



MR. MORGAN: I was there for two years. Then the split came in 1955 when they split Wildlife and Fisheries apart. I wanted to stay with Wildlife at that time. But the fact that I didn't have my pilot's license, my instructor got sick when we were about to finish my instruction. I had taken my spins and all that stuff. I hadn't done my cross-country. He got sick so I didn't finish that up. Of course, I was flying all of the time with the Pacer. I had been checked out with my partner on wheels, skis and floats. It was just one of those illegal type things, you know Jack?

MR. HODGES: No, I don't know about that! [Laughing]

MR. MORGAN: I wanted to go with Wildlife but there wasn't a spot for me. Fisheries offered me a two-grade raise to go with them. I thought, "Man, that's not bad!" So I went back with Fisheries. The guy that they brought out to Dillingham, he finally got fired; the guy that Clarence had hired in my place. He told me later that he wished he had kept me on and hired me a pilot. It didn't work out that way. But actually, it worked out pretty well for me, going with Fisheries. I wouldn't have gotten a two-grade raise I don't think.

MR. GROSSMAN: Did that eventually take you to the southeast?

MR. MORGAN: I am trying to remember when I first came to the southeast. It must have been in; I think it was the summer of 1957 that I wound up down here. There's a little gap in there, and I am trying to fill it in. My memory is getting a little foggy.

MR. GROSSMAN: Maybe you wanted to forget that section! So, you are piloting for the Fisheries Bureau; did you continue in the Law Enforcement pilot mode for those years?

MR. MORGAN: No, what I did was still Law Enforcement. I came down to Juneau and I was working for George Hewitt. He was the biologist in charge of the Juneau district. So George just turned me loose with the enforcement part of it. I think I was one of the first guys to put out these little silver boxes that we used to use for radios. It was about a 2 watt, Forest Service box. I think that's where we got them; from the Forest Service originally. I put them out with each stream guard because in 1956 we lost a stream guard down in the Petersburg district. I never found him.

MR. GROSSMAN: A stream guard was the guy who helped to prevent creek robbing?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, that was to stop creek robbing. We put these guys out in these bays.

MR. HODGES: And there were quite a few of them weren't there?

MR. MORGAN: Oh yeah, we had lots of them.

MR. GROSSMAN: Basically, it's a matter of them blocking the stream off with a net, right?

MR. MORGAN: Well, what they go out to a closed area in a bay that was closed. They would go inside the markers where the fish were all schooled up. They'd make a round haul and they were gone. But if you had a stream guard stuck up in the woods some place with some field glasses, and a skiff; they could get out there and give them a ticket. But it was pretty dangerous. You had one guy out there by himself. That's how we lost this one guy down there out of Petersburg.

MR. GROSSMAN: So with this radio, they could tell you that they were going to go and pinch somebody?

MR. MORGAN: Well, they had some communications. That made is a little different for them. It was also a lot easier if they got injured, if they hurt themselves or they burned up their camp. We had that happen too. A lot of these guys are really 'chichockoes' you know!?

MR. GROSSMAN: So this was in the late 1950's then?

MR. MORGAN: Yes.

MR. GROSSMAN: And were you still putting these people out and checking on them by airplane or did you convert then to boats?

MR. MORGAN: We checked on them both by airplane and boat.

MR. HODGES: You hired me to do that out of Petersburg in 1962.

MR. MORGAN: I was with the State then, though.

MR. HODGES: Yeah, but now you're at 1957, so you're going to make that transition.

MR. MORGAN: I'm going to get up there pretty quick!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Sid, when you were working out of Juneau, with the stream guards and all was southeast Alaska your area of responsibility, or were you kind of all over the place?

MR. MORGAN: No it was just I the Juneau district, which included Haynes and went down to south of Seymour.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: So there would be like dozens of stream guards out or not so many?

MR. MORGAN: You know, I can't remember how many we had. We probably had... Joe, how many did we have in 1960 when you were there.

MR. MCCLUNG: The Sitka area must have had twelve.

MR. MORGAN: They didn't have as many as Petersburg, I think. You know, Petersburg, where you were hired. Now you serviced those guys. It seems to me that we had twenty-some guys in Petersburg district. Does that sound reasonable?

MR. MCCLUNG: That sound about right. I am trying to figure out how many we had in Juneau?

MR. GROSSMAN: So at least a couple dozen. Did you concentrate on key systems or did you just move them around so the boats wouldn't be able to know where they were at?

MR. MORGAN: We had one in Seymour Canal. No, we had one in Bowl Harbor, Swan Cove, and King Salmon in Seymour Canal, Oliver's Inlet.

MR. GROSSMAN: It sounds like there were in bigger systems and could move around and check on the littler ones also.

MR. MORGAN: They'd check on any of the feeder streams. They all had skiffs to work with.

MR. HODGES: Were these the same areas that the [Alaska] Fish and Game serviced later?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, it was the same thing. Because that's what happened in the advent of Statehood, you know.

MR. HODGES: Out on Chichagof, and Surge Bay?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, Surge Bay, Redfish Bay. There was guards in there. I am forgetting those bays; I used to be able to knock them off. Just click them off. But it's been a long time. I've been retired for how long, twenty some years!?

MR. GROSSMAN: For your boat support, Sid, did you have a Fish and Wildlife Service vessel, or did you lease with people and have them transport skiffs and gear?

MR. MORGAN: A lot of the fellows that we had in Petersburg at that time were guys that we hired with their boats. They were old time fishermen. And we'd hire them as stream guards. We did the same thing with Fish and Wildlife and of course the State followed suit that first year at least.

MR. GROSSMAN: Is that the fox watching the henhouse?

MR. MORGAN: Well, maybe in some cases! I always felt that maybe the guys might be honest. They were old timers and we talked to them about how they had better play it straight because if they got caught it was a felony.

MR. GROSSMAN: So you hired these fishermen and it sounds like eventually it came around to where you guys figured that having your own vessel, you could better facilitate the needs of the Law Enforcement. Is that how you came around to acquiring the Surfbird?

MR. MORGAN: No, I don't think that occurred. I think this was, see, we had a lot of other vessels at that time for Juneau. I forget how many we had. They were smaller vessels than this of course.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There was the Brown Bear.

MR. MORGAN: Well, the old Brown Bear used to got to Bristol Bay before they got the Dennis Wynn. The Dennis Wynn was a FS Small. Of course the government always uses surplus stuff. What I was going to say about the Surfbird was that one of the reasons I think we got was because it was surplus. We didn't have to pay anything for it. There was just a transfer of paper.

MR. GROSSMAN: It was an Army vessel originally right?

MR. MORGAN: Right.

MR. GROSSMAN: Do you know anything about its military history at all?

MR. MORGAN: A little bit. It was used in Vietnam to go up some of those rivers there. It was used as a military vessel.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was it run from the west coast to there, or was it towed or hauled on a bigger ship?

MR. MORGAN: I think it was hauled on a barge or something.

MR. GROSSMAN: I see.

MR. MORGAN: I remember one time; we had a chance to get four of these I think. They were brand new and they were all on a barge. We could have gotten the barge and the four T boats. Fred, he was all for getting them. Hell, we'd have T boats until hell wouldn't have them! Even for parts!

MR. GROSSMAN: Right!

MR. MORGAN: But Gordy Watson was the Regional Director at that time and he didn't go for it.

MR. GROSSMAN: But he must have approved one, at least?

MR. MORGAN: I think we got the Surfbird before Gordy was the Regional Director. I can't remember for sure. Getting one, instead of four; we wouldn't have been able to use all of those. I think that was the objection. We had this big, steel scowl, and these four T boats.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: But the Surfbird wasn't brand new when you got it?

MR. MORGAN: No, the Surfbird wasn't new. These four were new.

MR. GROSSMAN: Do you know anything about its service in Vietnam?

MR. MORGAN: Just that it was used for running some of the rivers down there in combat.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was it for hauling cargo or men?

MR. MORGAN: No, I think they had a gun mounted on it.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It was designed to haul men back there, and cargo up here.  
[Indicating parts of the boat]

MR. GROSSMAN: So men were carried in the stern area?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I think I heard twenty-five men, and twenty-five tons up there, or something.

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, it could haul quite a bit.

MR. GROSSMAN: So when you guys first got this, it was still set up for that military service?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, and they used them as fireboats too, remember?

MR. HODGES: Yeah, and it also had a tow bar. It was a small tug in the harbors.

MR. GROSSMAN: So it could tow around other barges or boats or vessels and then the fire capacity; what was that? Would it pump salt water?

MR. HODGES: Salt water. There was a big fire pump down in the engine room. I know that!

MR. GROSSMAN: Okay.

MR. MCCLUNG: So that would have been sort of like a harbor tug?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah. They used them for a lot of different things. But they were all equipped that way, as I understand it.

MR. GROSSMAN: When they came on surplus, was it still under the Army control, or had somebody else picked it up and decided not to use it?

MR. MORGAN: I think we got it directly from the Army; the military anyway, whatever military organization that had them.

MR. GROSSMAN: Do you recall what year that was?

MR. HODGES: 1966 was the first year that the eagle surveys got going in a big way.

MR. MORGAN: Yeah.

MR. HODGES: So I am guessing that was the first year of the Surfbird, wasn't it Jake?

MR. JACOBSON: I was thinking it was maybe 1967 or 1968.

MR. HODGES: I think they did it in 1966 and then lost all of that first year of data; and re-did them in 1967.

MR. MORGAN: Well yeah, Fred and I did that. We did two years work in one. That was a hell of a job! We were gone all of the time!

MR. GROSSMAN: So, this thing shows up in Juneau, you guys got it....

MR. HODGES: I think it came from San Diego. Do you remember where it was?

MR. MORGAN: I thought it was on the east coast. It came around from the east coast, and I don't know how they got it here. I think they probably towed it on a barge.

MR. GROSSMAN: Through the Panama Canal?

MR. MORGAN: And I don't know how they got it up here to Juneau. I know it didn't come up on a barge. Maybe somebody went to Seattle or someplace and run it up here. I just don't know that. See, Joe Johnson was the first Skipper on it.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was he hired on as a full time employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service?

MR. MORGAN: Let me think a minute.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Joe was the Skipper in 1971 when I came.

MR. MORGAN: I know. I guess he was the first Skipper. I was trying to think. Some of these subjects get a little hazy!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Who was the Skipper after Joe Johnson?

MR. MORGAN: Obra Deese had it for a little while; a very short time. When we went out though, either Fred ran it or I did. Because Obra had only run...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Well Fred used to say, "All I need is a mechanic". And he would run the boat. Fred would run the boat.

MR. GROSSMAN: So you guys, to do your work, you were also the Skipper of the boat too?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, we were all qualified to run it.

MR. GROSSMAN: And the retrofitting that has gone on. Did you guys do that when it first got here?

MR. MORGAN: Well, it was something that just developed. Fred was the instigator of modernizing, you know, finishing the inside; putting in windows and stuff.

MR. GROSSMAN: Converting this troop transport area that we are in now, at the aft of the boat to the galley and changing the cargo hold below to the bunk space and putting the fresh water tank in and all that?

MR. MORGAN: Right.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I remember Fred talking about doing all of that interior work down there; all the strips of wood, insulation, and drilling the holes.

MR. GROSSMAN: I assume that the deck gun and the fire hose...

MR. MORGAN: That wasn't on it when we got it. No, the fire equipment was.

MR. GROSSMAN: And that went off and you guys put the crane on so you could load the skiffs aboard.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That crane didn't go on until I was aboard, and that was about 1975. Before that it was the mast, with the boom.

MR. GROSSMAN: So it was done by hand with pulleys?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No, it was a wench that brought up, that lifted. But it was hand pulleys that would swing it out.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We got so that we could handle that pretty fast too, didn't we?

MR. GROSSMAN: Did you have lighter skiffs?

MR. MORGAN: No, no. We didn't have any problem with the weight.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There was a Whaler. It was aluminum.

MR. GROSSMAN: So with enough block and tackle you could lift them by hand using the pulleys and bring them aboard.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The only thing was swinging that boom back aboard by hand.

MR. GROSSMAN: It took some work.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It was power lifted. The lift was powered, the swing was by hand. There was an electric wench, I guess; the same way with the anchor.



MR. GROSSMAN: So if I caught it right, from what you guys were just saying; the earliest projects were related to the eagle work. I know that you are still with the background of Law Enforcement.

MR. MORGAN: So was Fred.

MR. GROSSMAN: How did those two mesh? Were you guys enforcing laws regarding eagles, or ...?

MR. MORGAN: All federal game laws.

MR. GROSSMAN: How did this evolve into the eagle work? I know that there had been more eagle work done probably off this boat than anything.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That's what this was obtained for was to do the survey work.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: They also did their Law Enforcement off of it. But as this eagle work got really going by Fred Robards and Jim King. They did some aerial surveys and they figured out that the eagle nests were right near the shoreline. Nobody; like Fred said, 'you could ask anybody and they'd say that they know where three or four eagle nests are'. But they didn't know what the picture was. So Fred and Jim learned that they were all on the shoreline. So Fred realized that we had logging going on, we've got eagle nests that we can see from doing boat work. He decided that instead of trying to catch the Forest Service cutting trees, you know, in a covert way; let's find the eagle nests, and tell them where they are at, and we'll do a lot better job of saving eagles. That got the program going. And they got the boat to really facilitate it.

MR. GROSSMAN: And it made the Law Enforcement job a lot easier. It sounds like then it evolved into an agreement between the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service. That's where these suggested buffers came into being then? There's a 330-foot buffer, correct?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Three hundred and thirty-three feet, yeah; in all directions.

MR. GROSSMAN: And where did that number come from?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I don't know.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Five chains!

MR. GROSSMAN: Was that just a rough guess?

MR. MORGAN: The way I remember it was that it was kind of barrowed from work in the Great Lakes. One of the things that Jack reminded me of; Fred and Jim, they had these zones all the way around Admiralty.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: They were ten-mile stretches of shoreline.

MR. MORGAN: They counted the nests on those and then extrapolated how many birds there would be around Admiralty as the test area. It was amazing after we got through doing that survey all around Admiralty, how close it came out to what they had figured. I thought that was remarkable.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I don't think anyone realized how many eagle nests there were then either.

MR. MORGAN: I remember when Fred first asked me, he said, "Sid, how many eagle nests do you know?" I told him that I knew a few. There would be ten in that area and you didn't notice it. You didn't pick up on that. Fred had that kind of a mind. He could see things that needed to be done.

MR. GROSSMAN: You had the eagle work, and some Law Enforcement operations. What other sorts of projects do you recall, Sid that the boat was used for?

MR. MORGAN: Occasionally we'd take it out with in conjunction with Fish and Game, or with their biologists to do some of their work. We'd do a little of our work along with it.

MR. GROSSMAN: So probably during the deer seasons, the bear seasons, mountain goats, and that sort of thing?

MR. MORGAN: We did a merlot study one time. They were Marble Merlots. We did it with the Fish and Game.

MR. GROSSMAN: Would you say that there was a whole mish-mash of things?

MR. MORGAN: Yes. I can't remember everything we did. I know that sometimes we'd do a joint waterfowl thing.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I remember Dan Tynn was involved with that.

MR. MORGAN: Dan Tynn, yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That would be Law Enforcement wouldn't it?

MR. MORGAN: No.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No that was banding. He did the goose banding in Glacier Bay.

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, we did that.

MR. MORGAN: We did trapping and banding down in Rocky Pass with the Surfbird. We'd go into Big John Bay and anchor the boat and work from there.

MR. GROSSMAN: How about some of your experiences aboard? What would say was the most frightening?

MR. MORGAN: I can't remember anything that was really frightening on the Surfbird. The only time that I was really shook up was that time when I was on Bristol Bay in those eighty mile and hour gale.

MR. GROSSMAN: From there it was down hill!

MR. MORGAN: Well, there was no electric bilge pump on the silly thing, and the engine room was awash with salt water. That gets your attention!

MR. GROSSMAN: That probably made you appreciate the inside waters of southeast Alaska?

MR. MORGAN: It was a picnic down there!

MR. GROSSMAN: How about the most humorous experience that you can recall?

MR. MORGAN: There is one funny thing that I think Jack and Jake will remember; Andy and... the four of us were down south of Wrangell. We were doing eagle nest survey work. Jack was with Andy and Jake was with me and we both had two little areas that we were working in. Andy and this character here [pointing to Mr. Hodges] got through with their area a little ahead of Jake and I. So when Jake and I came down around the bend finishing up our work we looked over and there was this old steam donkey out on the beach. And hell, there was smoke coming out of the top of this damn thing. Of course, these guys, they build a fire in this thing! Do you remember that Jake?

MR. JACOBSON: Yep! Andy told me that we were going to do this. We threw some wood in there and then he got a coffee can and got it about a third full of gas. He says, "Throw that in there!" There's about a three-foot hole in this boiler thing. He wanted me to throw that gas in there and then light that sucker. I lit that off and a ball of flame came out of that hole, right in my face! [All laughing]

MR. GROSSMAN: Did it singe your hair?

MR. JACOBSON: I don't know but it scared the heck out of me! That was Andy's idea!

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, and he got you to do it! He didn't do it!

MR. GROSSMAN: So how many years did you have down around here with the Surfbird, Sid?

MR. MORGAN: I started in late 1969. Well, I can't remember.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Well, you and Fred were doing surveys in 1966 and 1967. 1967 is when you had to redo all of those.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There was so much logging going on then that you guys were out a lot. This boat was just kept busy doing eagle stuff.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And it was important because they were just ahead of where the clear-cut logging was happening.

MR. MORGAN: Especially that nut that came in and took all of that data out of Fred's desk. It's just like this guy knew what he was doing. He was some nut. We couldn't figure out what happened.

MR. GROSSMAN: So someone came into the federal office?

MR. MORGAN: He came into the office and took...that was the most valuable thing we had in the bloody office, was all that data!

MR. GROSSMAN: A year's worth of eagles' nest locations. They knew that that would stop the logging?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: This gut admitted to it. About ten years later he admitted to taking these secret documents in the federal building. He was a nut. He just thought they were some secret documents. [Like foreign espionage]

MR. MORGAN: He didn't know what he was doing! We don't know how in the heck he got in there at lunchtime. It was just a short time that Maxine wasn't in there. At that time, she was our Secretary.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I think it was a couple of weeks later that Fred noticed this stink. There was something stinking on the windowsill. We went over there, and there was half a cup of urine. A coffee cup with urine in it, that was rotting over there.

MR. GROSSMAN: This guy was really strange!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He was a nutcase, but he left his mark.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He staked out his territory! [All laugh]

MR. GROSSMAN: When did you retire Sid?

MR. MORGAN: Let's see, it was in January of 1978.

MR. GROSSMAN: So you were involved with the Surfbird then, for what sounds like roughly ten or twelve years.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Was there another Captain in there after Obra Deese?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There was Obra Deese and then Andy Anderson came along.

MR. MORGAN: Andy came in 1971 didn't he?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: In 1973, I think.

MR. MORGAN: Was it that late?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yeah. I think so. Andy wasn't here. I was a temporary in 1971, 1972 and 1973, and he wasn't here then.

MR. MORGAN: Was it Joe?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It must have been Joe. I was with Joe in 1971. And I can't remember who I was with in 1972.

MR. GROSSMAN: So it was in the early to mid 1970s then?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yeah.

MR. GROSSMAN: And then Andy ran it until you took over Joe, right?

MR. MCCLUNG: 1989, right.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I think I was wrong. I think 1968 must have been the first year.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That's what I was thinking, yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: 1969 was when it was redone because of nut.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You can look in the nest atlas at all of those maps, and you can see all of the areas that you guys did in 1969. It was obvious that you were covering a lot of places, but you didn't have a hell of a lot of time.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: So you'd just do so much in one bay and then jump over to another bay; instead of doing the whole bay?

MR. MORGAN: Well see? We were staying ahead of the logging operations. That was what was so bad.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: In 1969 and 1970, you guys were busy!

MR. MORGAN: It was really rough. We found something interesting. We were down there on the south side of Serembo Island. It was one of those deals where we had to redo. I went in looking for this daggoned nest. I got just inside the woods and I found a tree about that big. It had an eagle nest, nailed right on it.

MR. GROSSMAN: The three was about six or seven inches in diameter?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah. It was about like that. I went back in the woods, it was probably another one hundreds yards and found a nest, and there was no sign on that one. So I marked it. I went back and told Fred, "Who in the hell was up here last time?" He said that there was a black guy that was farmed up. They used to send up agents for the summer to help out. This guy was afraid of bear. So he'd go in and get out of sight and he stay back there in the woods. Pretty soon he'd go, tack-tack-tack.

MR. GROSSMAN: He was knocking it on a tree that was close to the beach.

MR. MORGAN: A tree that was close to the beach, where he wasn't able to be seen from the Surfbird.

MR. GROSSMAN: So it was a good thing that you had to redo some of that.

MR. MORGAN: Some of them yeah. The stuff that that guy marked. He was afraid of bear and he would go in the woods very far.

MR. GROSSMAN: So what did you think of the Surfbird as a work platform, having worked on it for that many years?

MR. MORGAN: It was great. It was really...we had it down to a science as far and loading and unloading the boat, and the amount of supplies we'd take out each trip. We never had a problem. Everything worked smooth.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: How many of you would usually go?

MR. MORGAN: A lot of times it was just the three of us. The Skipper would general cook the meals. Sometimes Fred and I would cook at night to give him a break. We all took turns washing dishes. We all got along great. You can remember that, Jack.

MR. HODGES: Oh yeah!

MR. MORGAN: The new guy didn't get all of the chores, you know.

MR. GROSSMAN: If you had to do it all over again, what would you change, Sid?

MR. MORGAN: I always felt that I should be paying the government for what I was doing. That's my attitude!

MR. GROSSMAN: You don't hear that very often do you?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You did have a pretty good deal Sid!

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, I thought it was great.

MR. GROSSMAN: The Law Enforcement end of it; that could probably have its hairy moments. On that angle of it; did you enjoy the Law Enforcement work itself?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, I always enjoyed that. We were always out on the flats during duck season. If we were in port, we were patrolling the hunting grounds around here. When we were up in Haynes we'd patrol that area. Of course we didn't get up there that often. We always went up there in the fall for the counting of the eagles. I don't know, it worked out real well.

MR. GROSSMAN: You felt good about what you were doing?

MR. MORGAN: We felt good about what we were doing. We made a few cases. Like on the juveniles. Fred and I had a system where if we caught juveniles we would seize their shotguns and birds if they had birds. I'd say, "You're going to have to go down and talk to my boss, and man, he'd tough"! We'd bring them down to the boat. Of course,

we'd notify their parents of what we were doing. A lot of times some of the parents would get little irate. We'd say, "well now, if you'd prefer, we'll taken them through Juvenile Court". We'd rather give them our program and make better sportsmen out of them. All of the parents agreed to that. We'd make them study waterfowl identification. We'd make them study regulations. Two weeks later, they'd have to come back and have an oral review with us. We never told them that we were going to give them back their shotguns. They thought they had lost their bloody shotguns. We had a funny incident on the Grizzly Bear years ago. These two brothers; there were three boys that were caught and two of them were brothers. We brought them down to the Grizzly Bear to talk to Fred. Of course these kids were really shook up by that time, see? Anyway, we wanted to get their story. So this one brother, he finally decided that he was going to be the spokesman. He was almost in tears. He was about eleven or twelve maybe. He was telling us that he and his brother would save nickels and dimes for ever, to buy these new shotguns and this was the first year they had used these new shotguns. He said that they were hunting out there; and you can't find the place now because Fred Myers is in there. It was a spot out there between the old highway and the airport.

MR. GROSSMAN: On the Medenhall Wetlands here in Juneau that is now developed.

MR. MORGAN: Right. There were some logs that had drifted in on the high tide. The kids had watched these geese. They'd feed out there. And when they got spooked, they fly out a certain way every time. He said, "We were down here behind these logs and what we hadn't counted on was all of these hunters walking across, getting over to the wetlands before shooting hours." They spooked their geese early. These geese got up, and he said that they flew just the way they were supposed to fly. He said that the geese go up in front of them and they figured that it was now or never, so the got up and shot two of them. It was hard to keep a straight face while this kid was telling this story. So anyway, when we got threw with that whole program, we gave them their shotguns back. We hadn't intended to keep their shotguns anyway. If it was an adult, we'd seize their gun and it would be the last they'd see of it. That was one of the funniest stories that we encountered.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Another interesting thing that the Surfbird was getting involved with was back in the days when the whole thing was getting started on DDT and the problems with Bald Eagles and other birds of prey and what not. They decided to set up an experiment station in Petersburg. They needed to capture eagles; and down there they would feed those eagles. Some of those eagles they would feed DDT to, others they wouldn't. They had this comparative study going on and they had to catch eagles. That's when Fred developed the floating bait snare on a fishing line. We found that it was extremely effective.

MR. GROSSMAN: That's monofilament loops wrapped around a herring that had some sort of floatation inserted inside the herring.



UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Fred felt like he had to keep this an absolute secret. It was so effective that he thought others would use it. He really tried to keep it a secret and not let it out. Of course it's been published now, about the technique. The boats were used for capturing eagles for that purpose.

MR. MORGAN: You know, another story that reminds me of Jack; in Disneyland they wanted a pair of Bald Eagles, do you remember that story?

MR. HODGES: I remember the story.

MR. MORGAN: We went out and used this same snare deal on a Cod about this size. You've got the monofilament stuff and of course your Salmon pole. You get out on the back and let the line drift back. There was an eagle up here that we wanted to catch. As soon as we got a little ways away from him, this old eagle would come down that fish. We'd let him get airborne then set the hook, dump him in the water and go over there with a skiff and pick him up and put him in a cage. You know, six months later those birds were on TV, and they were trained? I couldn't believe it! Those two birds that we caught. These were adult birds! They were at least five years old. I'd sure like to have that information.

MR. GROSSMAN: How they could have trained them that quick?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah! How they could train them in six months!

MR. GROSSMAN: What were they trained to do?

MR. MORGAN: They were performing for this trainer, whoever he was; just like falconry. Do you remember seeing that, Jack?

MR. HODGES: I can't remember.

MR. GROSSMAN: That would have been Walt Disney in Florida, right?

MR. MORGAN: No, it was California. At least that's where we shipped them.

MR. HODGES: Another thing we used the boat for, in conjunction with the high school was to recover all of the bones from a dead Humpbacked Whale. That was the stinkiest operation! Andy was not too pleased with all of those ribs bones and everything on deck! He said it took ten months to get the stench off of the boat!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I picked up a couple of whale vertebrae and I had them for years before they would get rid of that stench! It takes a long time.

MR. GROSSMAN: And then the school reassembled it?

MR. HODGES: They were supposed to. I don't know if they ever did. But man, eating dinner was not the same with...

MR. GROSSMAN: ...dead whale.

MR. HODGES: Well, with the people who had worked on the dead whale. There were students and a couple of teachers. Even though they had raingear on. They left all of their raingear and boots out of doors but still.

MR. MORGAN: That's something that sticks with you!

MR. GROSSMAN: From the look on your face, Jack, it still is a vivid memory! Well Sid, is there anything else that you can think of that might be of interest to folks about the history of the T boats in general. I know you were telling us that the Surfbird is what spurring the Fish and Wildlife Service to getting the Curlew and the Aleutian Tern.

MR. MORGAN: That's right.

MR. GROSSMAN: It's worked out very well, except that the Aleutian Tern I know was just a little bit too round bottomed and too small for the Aleutians.

MR. MORGAN: Too small.

MR. GROSSMAN: You'd testify to that after being in Bristol Bay. Is there anything else that you can think of?

MR. MORGAN: You know, the Park Service had one too. At that time they had one, anyway.

MR. GROSSMAN: The Nunantak. And again, that was probably following the lead of getting the Surfbird.

MR. MORGAN: That was after we got the Surfbird.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What about naming the boats?

MR. MORGAN: We named them after sea birds.

MR. GROSSMAN: Was there a contest for that, or did just a bunch of you sit around with a cup of coffee and decide?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Some names are already claimed, so you were limited.

MR. GROSSMAN: I see.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I remember pulling in to port in Petersburg and a couple of young kids there about ten years old were there. They wanted to come on board and take a look. They were all excited about this boat. I think they said, "What's the name of this boat, Super Bird?" The other kid said, "No, it's Surf Board!"

MR. GROSSMAN: I know with the Curlew, somebody dubbed it "The Curly W".

MR. MORGAN: That was Andy.

MR. GROSSMAN: I imagine it's been called worse, both of them.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: The Lam Duck.

MR. GROSSMAN: You mean that one over there? Was there some sort of rivalry?

MR. MORGAN: I don't remember any rivalry.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There was lots of teasing back and forth.

UNIDENTIFIED MAKE: But we had the Grizzly Bear before this one?

MR. MORGAN: Yeah, the old Grizzly Bear. Carl Halsted was the Skipper on that. He lived up there by the breakwater. You know that house just northwest of the breakwater? He built that house. I forget what year it was.

MR. GROSSMAN: That's about all I had.

MR. MORGAN: I'll think of a lot of things when I get home.

MR. GROSSMAN: Well, let us know if there's anything else, Sid, that comes to mind about the history of getting the boat and any other projects. Also, if you come across any photos that you'd like to share; we can scan them in and get them back to you the same day.

MR. MORGAN: You know, I've got boxes of photographs from when I was with the National Marine Fisheries. And from when I was on the high seas Law Enforcement work that I did for seven years. I took probably hundreds if not thousand of pictures of

all kinds of different ships. I've got those got those mixed up with my other slides. It's just a mammoth job to go through that stuff. If I can find them, I'll see what I can dig up.

MR. GROSSMAN: That would be wonderful. Even if they are slides, we can scan them also. Well thanks, guys!

MR. MORGAN: I am just hoping that they are preserved. It's been a long time. I've been retired for over twenty years. I don't know how good they are any more.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: If they are kept in the dark and at a cooler temperature, they are probably all right.

MR. MORGAN: I've got them in their regular boxes. And I've got those in a cardboard box. And I've got them stored in a closet, so. I tried to keep them in the dark.